
Art Division

Staff Contact Persons: Keep track of all Veterans who enter through your facility and enter their information into **Local Level Participation form on page 14 of the handbook**. Send this form to Arts4Vets@va.gov when your local competition has ended.

NEW for 2023 – Facilities may submit the top three finalists in each category. A formal competition is not required at the local level but is strongly encouraged. All eligible Veterans should be given the opportunity to participate regardless of degree of talent.

The national judging will occur in October and November via the digital image judging process with results being announced in December. Staff contact persons at each facility will be notified of the competition results via E-mail.

Following the national judging, first-place pieces from each art division category should be shipped to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival host VA facility location. Entries that are fragile may not be shipped and may instead be displayed in the Festival art exhibit as a poster image.

***IMPORTANT – When shipping national first place artwork to the Festival it is required that NO GLASS be used.** The artwork can be left without a protect layer or if a protective layer is needed, **Plexiglas, (not glass) must be used.** This requirement is in place due to the risk of potential damage to the artwork and for the safety of those who will be unpacking the artwork.

Tips for Taking Better Digital Art Images

- **Two-dimensional pieces may submit two images** – one image as the total presentation and one image showing more detail.
- **Three-dimensional pieces may submit three images** – one image from the front, one image from the back or side and one in more detail.
- **The art piece should fill the photo** – get as close as possible so the piece fills the viewfinder of the camera. **Do not include the title card, show exhibit card, art award ribbon, etc. in the photo.**
- **Include the framing and matting of pictures** – these items are part of the total presentation. Pedestals or bases that are part of the artwork should also be included in the digital image.
- **Frame the piece using a neutral background** – colorful backgrounds can alter the color of your piece by reflecting color onto it.
- **Watch for shadows on the background** – move the item being photographed away from the background to eliminate shadows.
- **Be alert for glare** – try changing the direction and location of the lighting or soften the light by bouncing it off a wall or screen. You can also try removing the glass or plexiglass to reduce glare.

Art Division Rules

1. Veterans need to communicate (as early as January 2023) with their local VA facility to find out their local competition deadline date.
2. **Facilities may submit the top three finalists in each category.** A formal competition is not required at the local level but is strongly encouraged. All eligible Veterans should be given the opportunity to participate regardless of degree of talent.
3. All artwork entered (except for the Military Combat Experience) must have been **completed/photographed after October 1, 2022.** Artwork submitted in a prior year in any form of completion may not be entered again.
4. Complete the art entry form with detail about the mediums and techniques used. This information is crucial to the judging process and is shared with the judges. Do not include Veteran diagnosis information or personal statements in the mediums/techniques section. This information is not part of the judging process unless submitting an entry into Military Combat Experience, Group Art, or the Special Recognition categories in which case a separate write-up is required.
5. All art entries must be created solely by the Veteran and/or Veterans submitting the art entry.
6. Reproductions of another artist's original two-dimensional artwork, photographs, or computer-generated art (including inkjet, Giclee and other types of reproduction methods) will not be accepted. The use of Giclee is only acceptable in the following categories: Printmaking, Black and White Photography, Color Photography and Digital Art.
7. All two-dimensional artwork must be exhibition ready (ready to hang for display).
8. If an entry contains a craft kit, it must go into a craft kit category unless otherwise stated in the category definitions (for example: soapstone carving kits go into the carving category).
9. GUNS, BLADES, KNIVES or other WEAPONS will **not** be accepted due to VA regulations banning these items from VA facilities.
10. No one Veteran will be allowed to enter more than three art categories and one group category in the art division.
11. Dipped art, and puzzles (including puzzle kits) will not be accepted.
12. Two electronic jpeg images may be submitted for each two-dimensional entry. Please include one image of the art entry in its entirety and one image of the art entry in more detail. **(Optimal image file size is 1 MB.)**
13. Three electronic jpeg images for each three-dimensional entry will be accepted. Please include one image from the front of the art entry in its entirety, one image from the back or side of the

art entry in its entirety, and one image of the art entry close up in more detail. **(Optimal image file size is 1 MB.)**

14. Sets in the fine arts and applied arts may contain **no more than three pieces**. Chess sets are an exception. The pieces must relate to one another in an obvious way to the judges in order to be classified as a set. **No sets** are allowed in the kit categories, unless a single kit contains a set such as a set of suncatcher Christmas ornaments in which case, no more than 3 pieces may be submitted for judging.

Further clarification of sets:

- Examples of two-dimensional sets are diptychs, triptychs, or series—no more than three separate pieces of artwork that are clearly intended to be displayed together as ONE PIECE with equal size and framing. Imagery/content must relate to each other in clear and obvious way.
 - Three-dimensional sets must relate to each other in an obvious way and may contain no more than three pieces for judging purposes.
15. Entries that include personal collections such as spoons, medals, or coins (where the content of the entry is not created by the Veteran) will not be accepted.
16. Entries that are first-place national competition winning pieces **MUST** be fully assembled when shipped. Diorama's will not be shipped. These art pieces will be displayed in poster form during the Festival art exhibit.
17. **Artwork Size Restrictions** - Each national art entry must be able to fit into **one box**. The box can be up to 150 lbs., up to 165 inches in length and girth combined. Length cannot exceed 108 inches. To measure packages use the following formula: **length + 2x width + 2x height**

Step 1. Determining Length - Measure the longest side of the package, rounding to the nearest inch. This is your length.

Step 2. Determining Girth (2x Width + 2x Height). Measure the width of the package, rounding to the nearest inch. Multiply this number by 2. Measure the height of the package, rounding to the nearest inch. Multiply this number by 2. Add these two numbers together. This is your girth.

Step 3. Add the length and the girth together. This is your package measurement.

****Entries that exceed the weight and measurements indicated above will be disqualified.***

Fine Art Categories & Military Combat Experience

1. **Acrylic Painting** - The creation of original work by applying acrylic paint to a surface. The surface is not limited to canvas; it can be on wood, plaster, leather, metal, glass, etc.
2. **Oil Painting** - The creation of original work by applying oil paint, oil sticks, or oil pastels to a surface. The surface is not limited to canvas; it can be on wood, plaster, leather, metal, etc. Encaustic painting should be entered into this category.
3. **Watercolor** - The creation of work using watercolor paint. The surface is not limited to canvas; it can be on wood, plaster, leather, metal, etc.
4. **Monochromatic Drawing** - A monochromatic drawing consists of lines that use a **single** color and shades of that color that may be done using pencil, ink, charcoal, etc. Any use of additional color should be entered into colored drawing.
5. **Colored Drawing** - A colored drawing consists of lines of two or more colors and may be done using colored pencils, markers, etc.
6. **Pastels** - An art medium in the form of a stick, consisting of pure powder pigment and a binder. A pastel is usually a painting rather than drawing because the color is applied in masses rather than lines. **Note:** Oil pastels should be entered into the Oil Painting category.
7. **Sculpture** - Art created by shaping, combining, modeling or casting materials such as plastic, clay, textiles, wax or polymers into a work of art. They may be free standing or relief. **Note:** Carved sculptures should be entered into the Carving category, metal sculptures should be entered into the Metalwork category, and glass sculptures should be entered in the Glasswork category.
8. **Pyrography** - A design burned into a surface by using wood burning tools. **The design must be original.** This process is typically done on wood but can also be done on leather and other surfaces. If transfers or tracings are used, the piece must be entered in the Transfer/Engraving Art Kit category.
9. **Printmaking** - A multiple-replica (more than one copy or print) art form. It consists of an original print or proof from a master plate created through such processes as lithography, etching, woodcut, engraving, etc. Computer graphics must be entered into Digital Art category.
10. **Pottery** - A **functional** piece of fired ceramic ware (bowl, vase, pot, etc.) The form can be wheel-thrown or hand-built, not slip cast in a mold. Porcelain is included in this category. Slip cast ceramics belong in Glazed or Stained/Painted ceramics categories. Sculptural clay pieces should be entered into the Sculpture category.

- 11. Black and White Photography** - A monochromatic photograph using black and white and varying shades of grey or sepia tones. Photographs must be mounted and framed. This category includes both film and digital forms of photography. Sepia and other tonal prints such as cyanotypes (blueprints) should be submitted into this category.
- 12. Color Photography** - A color photograph. Photographs must be mounted and framed. This category includes both film and digital forms of photography.
- 13. Digital Art** - Art that was completely created using digital technology. The work is created entirely through software or applications. All original entries must be printed, mounted and framed to qualify for this competition.

It is **required** that in addition to listing the software programs or applications used, techniques must also be detailed in the “mediums/techniques used” section of the entry form. **Use of Photoshop is only allowed if the application is used to wholly create an original piece, not to modify photography. Animation and videos will be disqualified.**

Note: Digitally enhanced/edited photography should not be entered into this category. 3D printed artwork will not be accepted. Photography that has been digitally enhanced/edited should be entered into either the Black and White Photography category or the Color Photography category.

- 14. Military Combat Experience** - The medium used must be a fine art or applied art medium. Unlike the other art categories, there are NO restrictions as to when the artwork was created however entries submitted previously into this category are not eligible to compete.

To enter this category there are **four requirements**:

- **A Word document containing a typed statement/narrative** (50 to 250 words) composed by the Veteran and/or his VA staff contact person **explaining how the art relates to the Veteran’s wartime experience. Entries submitted without a write-up will not be judged.** *Judging for this category equally takes into consideration the written narrative as well as the skill involved in the artwork.*
- The Veteran must have experienced combat duty during World War II, Korean War, Vietnam, Gulf War, Grenada, Panama, Kosovo, Somalia and other recognized combats or current combat operations.
- The artwork must **relate to the Veteran’s personal experience in that war or conflict** but does not need to be a graphic representation of that combat experience.
- Consent forms 10-3203 and 10-5345 (included in this handbook) must be signed and dated by the Veteran. The staff contact person submitting the entry for the Veteran should safeguard the signed consent forms at their VA facility.

Applied Art Categories & Group Art Category

15. **Glazed Ceramics** - Clay pieces formed by pouring slip in a mold, bisque fired, and then finished with the application of glaze(s) and fired. Entries that contain bisque pieces that are painted and/or stained, as well as glazed, are to be entered into the painted ceramic category.
16. **Stained or Painted Ceramics** - Clay pieces formed by pouring slip in a mold, fired into bisque ware and finished with the application of stains or paints. **If firing is the last step when creating your piece, the piece must be entered into Glazed Ceramics.** Ceramics using both painting and glazing techniques should be entered into the stained or painted ceramics category.
17. **Woodworking** - This refers to pieces constructed of wood that may have a **functional/useful** purpose, such as a jewelry box, a chess set, a clock, etc. **Wood lathe work or wood turning is included in this category.**
18. **Carving - Decorative** art achieved by carving away unwanted materials from an original piece of material. It may be relief or in the round. Material used includes stone, wood, ivory and other hard substances. **Note: Soapstone carving kits are to be included in this category.**
19. **Jewelry (not beads)** - Jewelry pieces made through casting, channeling, lost-wax, wire wrapping, etc. Jewelry incorporating beads should be entered in the Beadwork category.
20. **Crocheting/Knitting** - The use of yarn or thread and a crochet hook, knitting needles or nifty knitters to create a pattern/design and is often a useful object.
21. **Mosaic** - The art of decoration with small pieces of colored glass, tile, stone or other hard material used to create a pattern or picture.
22. **Collage** - An artistic collage work may include newspaper clippings, ribbons, bits of colored or hand-made papers, portions of other artwork, photographs, and such, glued to a surface. Collage is two dimensional. Scrapbooks are not allowed.
23. **Assemblage** - A form of sculpture comprised of "found" objects arranged in such a way that they create a new piece. These objects can be anything organic or man-made. Assemblage is three dimensional. Personal collections alone (for example: coin collections, medal collections, etc.) will not be accepted. (Dioramas will not be accepted in this category. Diorama depicts a scene.)
24. **Original Design in Needlework** - This includes stitchery, needlepoint, quilting, sewing a garment, soft sculpture, embroidery, cross stitch, and crewelwork, etc. These are *original designs created and completed entirely by the Veteran* that are usually worked on fabric (occasionally leather) with a needle to create a finished piece. It may be flat or three-dimensional. Pre-printed patterns on the fabric, the use of commercial patterns, charts or graphs should be entered in the Fabric Art Kit category or Needlework Kit category.

25. **Original Design in Fiber Arts** - The use of a substance that can be separated into threadlike parts to create an **original** design in latch hook, rug punching, string art, basketry or weaving. Pre-printed patterns on the fabric, the use of commercial patterns, charts or graphs would be in the Latch Hook Kit category, Fabric Art Kit category, or Needlework Kit category.
26. **Knotting** - Lacework made by knotting cords, thread or other fibers. Beads, shells or other decorative materials may be used. Macramé and fly tying are examples of techniques that are in the knotting category. Tatting is included in this category.
27. **Leather Carving/Tooling/Stamping** - Involves the use of shaped implements (stamps) or other leather carving tools, examples include Swivel knife, veiner, beveler, pear shader, etc. Pre-cut leather pieces may be used. Kits are not accepted in this category.
28. **Metalwork** - The primary material used is metal. Tooling or punching a design or transfer, or metal assembled into a three-dimensional piece for decorative purposes are included in this category. Lathe work using metal is included in this category. Copper tooling should be entered into Transfer/Engraving Art Kit category.
29. **Glasswork** - Glass is used as the primary medium. Examples would include stained glass, hand-blown glass, fused glass and glass etching and enameling. Commercially shaped glass items that have been painted would be in one of the Fine Arts Painting categories.
30. **Beadwork** - Beads of any kind are used to create a design. Examples would include beaded jewelry, beaded belts or other items made on a beading loom, etc.
31. **Scroll Saw/Fretwork** - Decorative open patterns cut out of wood or metal using a scroll saw and/or files. Wood intarsia and marquetry are now included in this category.
32. **Mixed Media** - The distinct blending of two or more art techniques to create an object. The use of two or more **applied or fine arts** techniques (category types) in the creation of a single piece of art. *Entries in this category must include a description.* The types of art techniques (category types) must be identified on the entry form. Example: Painting, Sculpture, Carving.
33. **Group Art Category** - A single art entry created by a group of Veterans. Groups in art **are not limited in number of group members**. However no more than 5 eligible invited Veterans from the first-place national competition winning entry in the Group Art category will be funded by the Festival. **Note: Entries in this category must meet all size and weight restrictions.**

Entries in Group Art category **MUST** also include:

- **A Word document containing a typed statement/narrative** (50 to 250 words) composed by a VA staff person and/or Veteran group members explaining the creative process, goals of the group, and other helpful information. **Entries submitted without a write-up will not be judged.** *Judging for this category equally takes into consideration the typed narrative as well as the skill involved in the artwork.*
- Consent forms 10-3203 and 10-5345 (included in this handbook) must be signed and dated by the Veteran. The staff contact person submitting the entry for the Veteran should safeguard the signed consent forms at their VA facility.

Craft Kit, Diorama & Special Recognition Categories

- Definition of a Kit entry: All materials needed to complete the project are supplied in the kit. Embellishments may be made to the assembled kit using non-kit items.
 - Entries containing more than one kit will be disqualified (with the exception of the combined kit category).
- 34. Leather Kit** - A kit that comes pre-cut, pre-punched, pre-embossed and ready to finish, stain and/or lace.
 - 35. Wood Building Kit** - A wood kit that has a useful function such as birdhouses, carousels, cup racks, spice shelves, etc.
 - 36. Model Building (Plastic, Metal, Wood) Kit** - Snap together, glue together, or assembled plastic, metal, and/or wood model kits. (Diorama's will not be accepted. The definition of a diorama is a three-dimensional representation of a display or scene.)
 - 37. NEW - Weaving Kit** – A kit that uses string, wood, fiber, etc. to create a design. This category now includes basket weaving kits, dream catcher kits and beading kits that DO NOT involve the use of a needle. *Note: This category was formerly known as String Art Kit.
 - 38. Latch Hook Kit** - A rug kit that comes in a unit with the right amount and color of yarn in the kit and the pattern already printed on the canvas.
 - 39. Craft Coloring Kit** - A pre-printed design on fabric, paper, wood, canvas, rugs, etc that the Veteran fills in with colors of their choice using colored pencils, markers, paint, etc.
 - 40. Figurine Painting Kit** - Pre-formed plaster, plastic, metal or wood 3 dimensional figures that the Veteran paints following a separate diagram and instructions included in the kit. There are no outlines on the piece indicating color application areas.
 - 41. Paint by Number Kit** - Involves applying oil, acrylic, or watercolor paints to the outlined numbered areas.
 - 42. Suncatcher or Sand Art Kit** - Suncatchers involve the application of transparent glass stains on a pre-formed and outlined plastic shape. Sand art involves colored sand applied to pre-shaped adhesive areas.
 - 43. Fabric Art Kit** - A kit that includes the use of commercial patterns and fabric (cloth or yarn) to create a pre-printed pattern or design. Cut-n-tuck kits would be included in this category.
 - 44. Needlework Kit** - A kit that utilizes yarn or thread applied with a needle to plastic, cloth or canvas. Embroider kits, crewel kits, needlepoint kits, etc., are in this category. Pieces created from pre-printed designs, the use of commercial patterns and graphs qualify for this category.
Note: Beading kits that involve the use of a needle are to be included in this category.

45. **Transfer/Engraving Art Kit** - Copper tooling kits, foil scratch art kits and wood burning kits are included in this category which involves incising images, designs or patterns onto a surface by rubbing, scratching, burnishing, cutting or burning.
46. **Mosaic Kit** - A kit that uses small pieces of colored glass, plastic, tile, stone or other hard material to create a pre-printed pattern or picture. Woodscapes and Pixel Art would be included in this category.
47. **Combined Kit** - The integration of two or more **distinctly different** kits to create a **single** work of art. A collection of model cars or ornaments, etc. will not be accepted.
48. **Diorama** - A model representing a three-dimensional scene. National winning entry **will not** be shipped to the Festival. Winning entry will be displayed via a poster board.

Special Recognition Categories

The Special Recognition category of the visual arts division is divided into two separate categories. The intent of these categories is to reinforce the concept of the arts as therapy, where an individual uses artistic expression to facilitate successful treatment outcomes. Entries and their accompanying written statement/narrative from the Veteran's VA staff contact person should focus on how the arts are used by the individual(s) to rise above severe limitations. ***Judging for this category equally takes into consideration the written narrative as well as the skill involved in the artwork.*** Entries submitted into the Art Special Recognition categories can be fine art, applied art or a craft kit entry.

49. **Special Recognition Physical Disability** - Entries that recognize individuals who exhibit creative expression through the visual arts while possessing significant ***physical limitations***.
50. **Special Recognition Mental Health Challenges** - Entries that recognize individuals who exhibit creative expression through the visual arts while possessing significant ***emotional or mental health challenges***.

Entries in each of the two Special Recognition categories **MUST** also include:

- A **Word document containing a typed statement/narrative** (50 to 250 words) composed by a VA staff person or the Veteran explaining why the Veteran is deserving of special recognition. **Entries submitted without a write-up will not be judged.**
- Consent forms 10-3203 and 10-5345 (included in this handbook) must be signed and dated by the Veteran. The staff contact person submitting the entry for the Veteran should safeguard the signed consent forms at their VA facility.